

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended): An antimicrobial pigment, obtainable by agitating at 20-45°C, a suspension comprising one or more inorganic pigments and silver oxide, wherein said inorganic pigments are natural or synthetic mica, SiO₂, TiO₂, iron oxide, BiOCl, aluminium oxide and/or glass substrates with an outer layer of TiO₂, titanium suboxides, Fe₂O₃, SnO₂, ZnO, ZrO₂, Ce₂O₃, CE₂O₃, CoO, Co₃O₄, V₂O₅, Cr₂O₃, and/or mixtures thereof.

2. (Previously Presented): An antimicrobial pigment according to claim 1, wherein said one or more inorganic pigments are in each case platelet-shaped, spherical or needle-shaped.

3-5. (Canceled):

6. (Currently Amended): An antimicrobial pigment according to claim 1, wherein said inorganic pigments substrates additionally are coated with one or more layers of BiOCl and/or transparent, semitransparent or opaque, selectively absorbing, nonselectively absorbing or nonabsorbing metal oxides, metal suboxides, metal oxide hydrates, metals, metal nitrides, metal oxynitrides, metal fluorides and/or mixtures of these materials.

7. (Previously Presented): An antimicrobial pigment according to claim 6, wherein said one or more layers of BiOCl and/or transparent, semitransparent or opaque, selectively absorbing, nonselectively absorbing or nonabsorbing metal oxides, metal suboxides, metal oxide hydrates, metals, metal nitrides, metal oxynitrides, metal fluorides and/or mixtures of these materials are arranged as alternating layers of:

transparent, semitransparent or opaque, selectively absorbing, nonselectively absorbing or nonabsorbing metal oxides, metal suboxides, metal oxide hydrates, metals, metal nitrides, metal oxynitrides, metal fluorides and/or mixtures of these materials or BiOCl with a refractive index n > 1.8, and

transparent, semitransparent or opaque, selectively absorbing, nonselectively absorbing

or nonabsorbing metal oxides, metal suboxides, metal oxide hydrates, metals, metal nitrides, metal oxynitrides, metal fluorides and/or mixtures of these materials with a refractive index $n \leq 1.8$.

8. (Canceled):

9. (Previously Presented): An antimicrobial pigment according to claim 6, wherein the transparent, semitransparent or opaque, selectively or nonselectively absorbing or nonabsorbing metal oxides, metal suboxides, metal oxide hydrates, metals, metal nitrides, metal oxynitrides, metal fluorides and/or mixtures of these materials additionally contain organic and/or inorganic colorants or elements as dopant.

10-13. (Canceled):

14. (Currently Amended): An antimicrobial pigment according to claim 1, wherein L, a and b values represent the lightness, redness-greenness, and yellowish-bluish values, respectively, and the values for L, a, and b for said inorganic pigments and antimicrobial pigments have a maximum deviation for the L value of $-6 \leq \Delta L \leq 6$, for the a value of $-5 \leq \Delta a \leq 5$ and for the b value of $-5 \leq \Delta b \leq 5$.

15. (Canceled):

16. (Currently Amended): An antimicrobial pigment according to claim 1, wherein the amount of the silver oxide antimicrobial compound is in the range of 0.001 to 10 % by weight, based on the inorganic pigment.

17. (Withdrawn and Currently Amended): A method for the preparation of antimicrobial pigments comprising: agitating at 20-45°C a suspension comprising silver oxide and one or more inorganic pigments, wherein said inorganic pigments are natural or synthetic mica, SiO_2 , TiO_2 , iron oxide, BiOCl , aluminium oxide and/or glass substrates with an outer layer of TiO_2 , titanium suboxides, Fe_2O_3 , SnO_2 , ZnO , ZrO_2 , Ce_2O_3 , CoO , Co_3O_4 , V_2O_5 , Cr_2O_3 , and/or mixtures thereof.

18. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 17, wherein said preparation is performed in water, ethanol, methanol, 1-propanol, 2-propanol and/or mixtures thereof.

19. (Cancelled):

20. (Withdrawn): A method according to claim 17, wherein said silver oxide is substituted by silver halogenide, silver nitrate, silver sulfate, silver carboxylates, silver carbonate, silver citrate, copper oxides, copper sulfide, copper nitrate, copper carbonate, copper sulfate, copper halogenides, copper carboxylates, zinc oxide, zinc sulfide, zinc silicate, zinc acetate, zinc chloride, zinc nitrate, zinc sulfate, zinc gluconate, zinc citrate, zinc phosphate, zinc propionate, zinc salicylate, zinc lactate, zinc oxalate, zinc iodate, zinc iodide, or combinations thereof.

21. (Withdrawn and Currently Amended): A method according to claim 17, wherein the amount of the silver oxide antimicrobial compound is in the range of 0.001 to 10 % by weight, based on the inorganic pigment.

22. (Withdrawn): A method according to claim 17, wherein said antimicrobial pigments are further coated with a protective coating layer.

23. (Withdrawn): A method according to claim 22, wherein said protective coating is selected from silica, silicates, borosilicates, aluminosilicates, alumina, aluminum phosphate, and mixtures thereof.

24. (Withdrawn): A method according to claim 22, wherein said protective coating is applied wet-chemically.

25. (Withdrawn): In a method of inhibiting the growth and/or progeny of microorganisms by applying an antimicrobial agent, the improvement wherein said antimicrobial agent is an antimicrobial pigment according to claim 1.

26-27. (Cancelled):

28. (Withdrawn): A method according to claim 25, wherein said antimicrobial pigments are employed in combination with preservatives and/or one or more other antimicrobial agent.

29. (Withdrawn): A method according to claim 25, wherein said antimicrobial pigments are employed in combination with one or more antibiotic agents.

30. (Withdrawn): A method according to claim 29, wherein said one or more antibiotic agents are beta-lactam, vancomycin, macrolides, tetracyclines, quinolones, fluoroquinolones, nitrated compounds, aminoglycosides, phenicols, lincosamids, synergistins, fosfomycin, fusidic acid, oxazolidinones, rifamycins, polymixynes, gramicidins, tyrocydine, glycopeptides, sulfonamides, or trimethoprim

31. (Withdrawn): In a method of performing oral care using a dentifrice, mouthwash, toothpowder, chewing gum, lozenge, mouth spray, floss, dental paint, or glass ionomer cement formulation, the improvement wherein said formulation contains an antimicrobial pigment according to claim 1.

32. (Withdrawn): In a method for the prophylaxis and/or treatment of herpes infections by applying a formulation to infected areas, the improvement wherein said formulation contains an antimicrobial pigment according to claim 1.

33-34. (Cancelled):